

Health tips for World Cup fans

Soccer fans are reminded to stay health-conscious and eat smart while watching games in the World Cup, which kicks off on June 14 (Hong Kong time).

A spokesman for the Department of Health (DH) said today (June 10) that even though some football fans love crispy snacks such as potato chips and fried food, sugary drinks and alcoholic beverages while watching the matches, it is important to maintain healthy eating, avoid drinking alcohol and refrain from smoking for the sake of their health.

While enjoying the matches, avoid sitting or lying down for too long and try to do some stretching or move around regularly. Schedule some exercise to maintain an adequate level of physical activity.

"About 80 per cent of heart disease, strokes, type 2 diabetes and 40 per cent of cancers could be prevented through adopting a healthy lifestyle. Under the ['Towards 2025: Strategy and Action Plan to Prevent and Control Non-communicable Diseases in Hong Kong'](#) recently announced by the Government, one of the targets is to achieve a 10 per cent relative reduction in the prevalence of insufficient physical activity among adolescents and adults. Apart from watching the matches, the public should strive to take part in different kinds of sports activities to enjoy the fun of sports," the spokesman said.

"Some of the matches will run into the late hours of the day. Getting enough sleep is important as insufficient sleep can lower your immunity and make you prone to illnesses. It will also affect your work performance and increase risks of accidents and injury," the spokesman added.

Following are some tips for soccer fans to stay healthy while enjoying the international event:

Stay away from tobacco and alcohol:

* Alcohol can cause cancer and there is no safe drinking level. Non-drinkers are advised not to start drinking while drinkers should limit and cut down alcohol consumption to reduce harm.

* Binge drinking (also known as heavy episodic drinking, refers to consumption of more than 60 grams of pure alcohol on a single occasion, which is equivalent to approximately five cans of beers or five glasses of table wine or five pegs of spirits) increases the risk of alcoholic intoxication, accidental injury, violence and traffic accidents. In this connection, do not pressure your friends to drink and avoid drinking games.

* Never drink and drive. Use public transport or get a trusted person to take you home if you drink.

* As both active and passive smoking are hazardous to health, refrain from smoking and encourage family members or friends to quit smoking.

* When you feel like smoking, wash your face, do stretching exercises, try deep breathing and drink water to divert your attention from the urge.

Eat smartly:

* Choose healthier snacks such as baked potato chips, baked sweet potato chips, corn chips, unsalted nuts and low-fat popcorn, and eat in moderation.

* Limit fatty and sugary snacks such as potato chips, shrimp strips and buttered popcorn.

* Choose fresh fruits as your snacks to achieve the daily target of having at least two servings of fruit every day.

* Drink plenty of water or prepare a delicious and refreshing drink at home, such as home-made lemonade by mixing the lime and soda water together.

* Choose drinks with no or low sugar instead of alcohol and sugary drinks.

Do not forget:

* Ensure good indoor ventilation.

* Stretch and move around while watching the matches.

* Sit properly while watching a soccer match to avoid muscle aches afterwards.

* Make sure you have enough sleep. Insufficient sleep can lower your immunity and make you more prone to illnesses, affect your working performance and increase risks of accidents and injury.

* Reserve time to do some exercise.

* Strike a balance between watching matches and fulfilling your social commitments.

The spokesman added that people smoking in statutory no-smoking areas are subject to a fixed penalty. During the World Cup period, the DH's Tobacco Control Office (TCO) will strengthen its enforcement actions against smoking offences in pubs and bars. The TCO will also send letters to venue managers of bars to remind them to implement smoke-free measures in their indoor public places so as to safeguard the health of staff and customers.

"It may not be a bad idea for drinkers to check their drinking risk by logging on to the online version of the Alcohol and Health Questionnaire (change4health.gov.hk/en/audit) and limit their drinking volume accordingly," the spokesman said.

Members of the public can call the DH's health education hotline 2833 0111 and the DH's Integrated Smoking Cessation hotline 1833 183, or visit the Centre for Health Protection's website at www.chp.gov.hk and the TCO's website at www.tco.gov.hk for more information. They can also download the DH's mobile application "Snack Check" to assist in making healthier snack choices.